



Dear Members of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement:

The deans of nursing at Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University, University of Connecticut and Yale University together are writing to share our concerns about legislation granting the Connecticut State University System the authority to offer **“an education doctoral degree program in nursing education” HB5024.**

While Yale University, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University and the University of Connecticut share the goal of addressing the nursing shortage, we urge you to consider whether this is the most cost-effective and academically sound way to achieve this goal.

Cost Effectiveness

Given the dire fiscal constraints that the state is facing, you should recognize that there are at least 67 vacancies in nursing doctoral programs among our schools. As both private and public institutions, we **have approved** doctoral programs in nursing practice and research that qualifies individuals for faculty positions. Our programs are offered face-to-face and on-line, full and part-time. Thus, individuals seeking doctoral preparation in nursing have multiple options and spaces are available. This vacancy rate is similar to the national data that report a 20% unfilled capacity (NLN, 2007-2008). See table below.

Openings for Students in Doctoral Program in Nursing

Name of Institution	Type of Program	Number of Openings
Fairfield University	DNP	16
Sacred Heart University	DNP	16
Yale University	PhD	Requires full scholarship support, could easily add students ++
University of Connecticut	DNP	25
University of Connecticut	PhD	10
		TOTAL 67++

DNP=Doctorate in Nursing Practice; PhD=Doctorate in Philosophy

New doctoral programs require significant initial and on-going investment for faculty, typically including new faculty positions, curricula development, dedicated lab space, and access to databases, journals, and periodicals. Given this needed investment, it is unclear how a new program at CSUS could be started without a fiscal impact.

What is the Appropriate Degree to Educate Nursing Faculty?

The doctoral degree in nursing education contemplated in the legislation does not represent the national standard in terminal degrees in nursing that emphasize the use and discovery of evidence for practice. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the **only** national association that defines the avenues for doctoral preparation in nursing, defines two categories of doctoral preparation that are appropriate for nursing education:

Doctoral programs in nursing fall into two principal types: research-focused and practice-focused. Most research-focused programs grant the Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) with a small percentage offering the Doctor of Nursing Science degree (DNS, DSN, or DNSc). Designed to prepare nurse scientists and scholars, these programs focus heavily on scientific content and research methodology; all require an original research project and the completion and defense of a dissertation or linked research papers. Practice-focused doctoral programs are designed to prepare experts in specialized advanced nursing practice. They focus heavily on practice that is innovative and evidence-based, reflecting the application of credible research findings. The two types of doctoral programs differ in their goals and the competencies of their graduates. They represent complementary, alternative approaches to the highest level of educational preparation in nursing.

--AACN, Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice,
10-06

Please note that neither of these two degrees is in education, because of the clear need for nursing leaders to be well prepared in the scientific evidence of nursing practice, either to generate new knowledge or to apply those discoveries to practice.

The EdD makes sense as a terminal degree for the profession of *teaching*. In that regard, it is similar to the Doctorate in Nursing Practice, the Doctorate in Pharmacy, and the Doctorate in Physical Therapy. In other fields that are practice disciplines, there is long-standing use of professional degrees as the terminal degrees to reflect acquisition of discipline-specific knowledge, such as the J.D. (law), the Psy. D. (psychologists) and the M. D. (medicine).

Another national organization dedicated to nursing education is the National League for Nursing (NLN) – a group which has supported excellence in nursing since 1893 – developed a specific credential for nurses who are experts in practice to be recognized for the preparation and skills in nursing education. In its development of the Certification for Nurse Educators and its role definitions for academic nurse educators, the NLN has defined the scope of practice for academic nurse educators stating that, “Clinical competence and educational expertise are required to continue the advancement...” of the nurse educator role (NLN, 2005, p.25).

Conclusion

While we do not feel that this approval is the appropriate course of action for the General Assembly, we do hope to work with you to address the nursing shortage in a way that provides access to quality nursing programs while using taxpayer dollars as wisely as possible. In the attached appendix, there is a summary of each school's programs. You will see that annually each of us is adding newly prepared nurses to the workforce.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and your continued support of higher education in Connecticut. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or require additional information.

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Attachment

University of Connecticut Doctoral Programs in Nursing

At the University of Connecticut, the School of Nursing offers both the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees. The DNP is available as an on-line program, with a scant number of classes in Storrs each term for interactions with faculty, colleagues in the PhD program and special events. It was the first DNP program in the State and five people have completed the program with an additional six expected to complete in May. Its online nature makes it available to all residents. Enrollment is NOT at capacity and UConn definitely could handle more students (approximately 25). Additionally, the availability of the regional campuses makes it possible to hold seminars via videoconferencing for students who do not come to Storrs. The research degree is more than ten years old and has graduated approximately 4 students annually. There also is unused capacity in this program (5).

Both doctoral programs offer preparation in education that is closely linked to the evidence basis of each program. Through a structured three course sequence (9 credits); students may focus on nursing education theory and practice. UConn also provides a post-master's certificate in nursing education. It is a 9 credit sequence that provides individuals with the academic qualifications to take the CNE examination.

Our 30 doctorally prepared faculty has specialized knowledge, skills and ability to support the innovative, evidence-based projects for the DNP and the original research of the PhD students.

UConn has also expanded its Master's Entry in Nursing program in the past three years. It now is offered in Storrs, Waterbury and Stamford campuses. With DHE approval, it will be expanded to Avery Point (Groton) in January 2011. When Avery Point and Stamford are fully subscribed, there are 120 new RNs annually (currently approximately 60).

The bachelor's degree in nursing begins freshman year and is taught on the Storrs Campus, with some transfers into the program from the regional campuses at the beginning of the sophomore year. Approximately 140 individuals complete the program each May.

Yale

Unlike the others schools, Yale School of Nursing's programs are entirely at the graduate level. The school admits people with baccalaureate degrees in other field to a program that within 32 months provides basic nursing education and education in a clinical specialty. The clinical specialty education leads to roles as nurse practitioners, clinical specialists, nurse midwives, and nurse leaders. Registered nurses with baccalaureate degrees are also admitted directly to the specialty programs. In addition, the school offers a PhD in nursing science and is considering offering the DNP.

The MSN program graduates nearly 100 nurses yearly, and the PhD program graduates about 4 students each year. The MSN graduates frequently assume clinical roles, but often participate in the clinical education of students from myriad programs across the state. PhD graduates go on to postdoctoral training and assume professorial positions in Schools of Nursing.

Fairfield

As a degree program within a comprehensive Jesuit university, the DNP at Fairfield opens next fall and will build upon the Jesuit tradition of academic rigor, critical analysis of social systems, and direct service to those who are underprivileged and underserved. The School of Nursing focuses on care of vulnerable populations supports and encourages students to reflect on and examine their sense of calling on both personal and professional levels. Ignatian pedagogy, which focuses on Experiential Learning, Critical Reflection, and Thoughtful Action, is the foundation of the students' educational experience; incorporation of the reflective practice model throughout the curriculum gives our students the lifelong tools they need for the highest levels of professional practice, accountability, and leadership.

Sacred Heart

Sacred Heart University will launch a new Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program in September 2010. It will combine doctoral education that is focused on practice with innovation and practical clinical research and scholarship. It is designed to serve academically talented nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, midwives, nurse anesthetists, nurse executives, and educators. This offering solidifies the University's prominent position in the development of health care leadership. This cohort program is designed to be completed part-time in three calendar years. The curriculum offers two different career tracks: The Doctoral Clinical Practice in Health Care track is designed for the advanced practice nurse who wants to remain in clinical practice and have influence on health care outcomes at multiple levels. The Doctoral Leadership in Health Care track is for the graduate who wants a career in executive nursing management, but who still prefers a nursing doctorate with a connection to clinical practice. Students in this track may take nursing education electives if they aspire to have a career in an academic setting.

DNP graduates will be prepared to teach, lead and engage in practical, clinically focused scholarship and research. The Doctor of Nursing Practice degree is a clinical doctorate requiring the completion of a practice dissertation focusing on clinical nursing practice. The practice dissertation is structured to be completed in one year preparing the student to utilize research for the improvement of clinical care delivery, patient outcomes, and system management. It will be suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal or a book. Graduates will be expert in designing, implementing, managing, and evaluating health care delivery systems and will be prepared to lead at the highest clinical and executive ranks.

This unique hybrid/intensive program is specifically designed to maximize the number of potential career roles the doctoral nursing graduate may assume, whether in academic life, advanced clinical practice, or executive healthcare leadership. Classes are taught online, and students are required to attend two on-campus residencies per semester. This cohort program is 39 credits and is designed to be completed in a three-year part-time sequence.

